

European Union

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Dear Readers,

The first three months of 2007 have seen some important and positive developments on the Palestinian political scene, culminating in the formation of a National Unity Government on March 17 2007.

Over the same period the European Union has continued to be actively engaged in the process of revitalising the Palestinian - Israeli peace process. Both the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, and the Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, travelled to the region to meet with Arab and Israeli leaders. The Quartet, of which the European Union is a member, along with the United States, Russia and the United Nations, has met on a regular basis to underline its commitment to help both parties come to the table and negotiate with a clear political horizon in mind.

Conscious of the continuing economic and social pressures on many Palestinians, the European Commission has already committed 172 million euros of assistance in the first quarter of the year, on top of the record almost 700 million euros in total EU assistance to the Palestinians in 2006. The Temporary International Mechanism, which is providing assistance to almost one million Palestinians, has been extended until June to ensure that no-one falls through the cracks at this particularly sensitive and important junction.

There is no doubt in my mind that many challenges still lay ahead on the road to lasting peace in the Middle East. But as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the EU this year, we have to maintain the hope that even the bloodiest past can be set aside, and peace can prevail. As European leaders reminded us on March 25th, on the occasion of the anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome, "today we live together as was never possible before." My sincere wish is that in the not too distant future, the same can be said of Israel and Palestine.

John Kjaer - Head of Representation



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EU - Palestine: Political Developments

In the first three months of 2007, the EU continued its financial support to the Palestinian people, while attempting to promote the search for a lasting peace in the region. The EU's support for the peace process was visible in ongoing work within the Council of Ministers, in the priority given to the formation of a national unity government and in its work to strengthen and intensify the activity of the Quartet.

At its meeting on 22 January, the Council called on the Palestinians to end internal violence, condemned continued Israeli settlement-building, and welcomed the extension of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM), which provides direct financial aid to disadvantaged Palestinians and over 77,000 civilian public service providers and pensioners.

At the request of the Quartet, since February 2007 the EU has led discussions to establish a new mechanism to coordinate and harmonise aid in support of further efforts in the spheres of governance, economic reform and institution-building.

On the domestic Palestinian political front, the most important development of recent months has been the Mecca Agreement of 8 February on the formation of a National Unity Government. At

its meeting on 12 February the Council welcomed the agreement. The EU considers the establishment of a national unity government to be an important step in achieving stability and stopping Palestinian infighting; it therefore stands ready to engage with a legitimate Palestinian government as long as it adopts a platform reflecting the Quartet principles.

The EU continued to play an active role in the Quartet, which met on 2 and 21 February, and on 21 March. Following the latter meeting, the Quartet called on the new Palestinian government to respect its principles, and stressed that the new government would be judged not only on its programme but its actions .

In 2007, contacts between Palestinian and EU leaders continued. The EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, travelled to the region from 17 to 21 February and to Riyadh in March. The European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner also travelled to the Middle East in late February (see page 4). Following the conclusion of the Mecca Agreement, President Abbas travelled to Europe and met with HR Javier Solana, Angela Merkel, Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac.

Quartet statement of March 21 2007

The Quartet Principals -- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner-discussed by telephone the situation in the Middle East, and in particular the establishment of a Palestinian National Unity Government. The Quartet reiterated its respect for Palestinian democracy and the agreement reached in Mecca on 8 February 2007, which laid the foundation for Palestinian reconciliation. The Quartet expressed hope that the establishment of a new government on 17 March 2007 would help end intra-Palestinian violence and ensure calm. The Quartet reaffirmed its previous statements with regard to the need for a Palestinian government committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap, and encouraged progress in this direction. The Quartet agreed that the commitment of the new government in this regard will be measured not only on the basis of its composition and platform, but also its actions. The Quartet expressed its expectation that the unity government will act responsibly, demonstrate clear and credible commitment to the Quartet principles, and support the efforts of President Abbas to pursue a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thereby achieving the peace, security, and freedom the Israeli and Palestinian people desire and deserve. The Quartet reiterated the continuing need to coordinate and mobilize international assistance in support of the Palestinian people, and endorsed the continuation of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) for a three-month period while it evaluates the situation and the international community works to develop a more sustainable international mechanism for support to the Palestinians.

The Quartet expressed its strong support for Secretary Rice's efforts to further facilitate discussions with President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert with the aim of defining more clearly the political horizon for the establishment of a Palestinian state and an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Quartet agreed to meet in the region soon to review developments and discuss the way ahead.

EU - Palestine: Cooperation

European Commission commits 172 million euros in the first Quarter of 2007

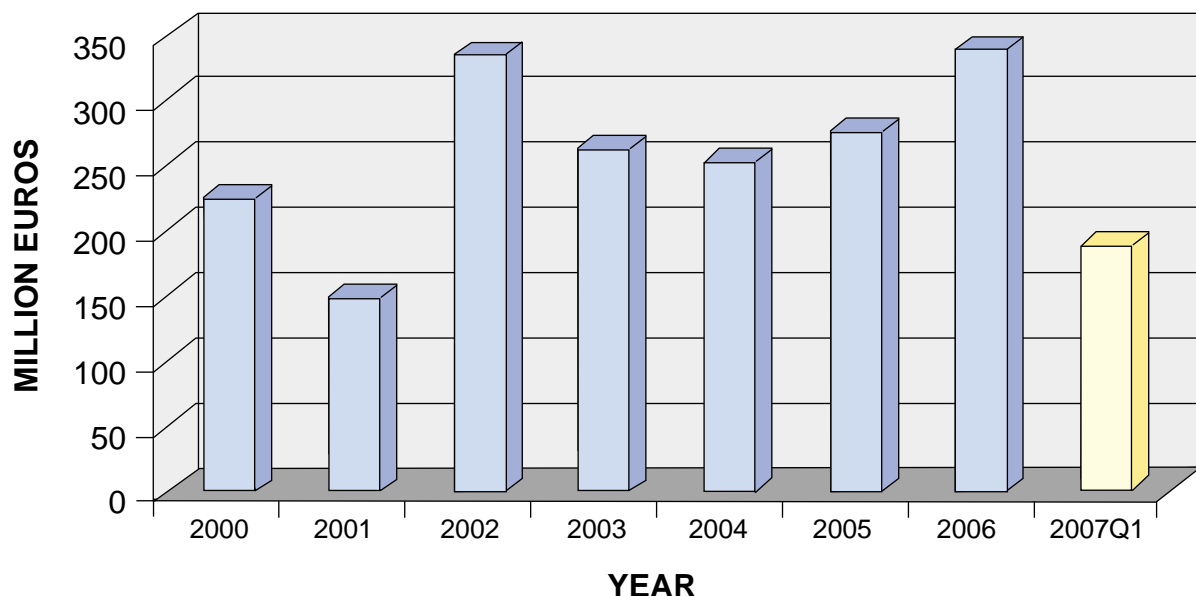
On 12 March 2007, the European Commission agreed to spend 137 million euros in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) on an urgent programme of special measures to support the Palestinian people. The decision had earlier been endorsed by the EU's 27 member states and by the European Parliament.

It comes hard on the heels of an earlier decision to allocate 35 million euros to the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) , and means that the European Commission, in the first three months of 2007, has committed a total of 172 million euros to the Palestinian people. That's equivalent to 43 euros for every Palestinian man, woman and child.

The money will be spent mainly on helping the most vulnerable and at-risk elements of the population, with refugees benefiting from 66 million euros of support delivered by UNRWA, and most of the rest being spent by the EU-led Temporary International Mechanism on providing basic public services like medicines and electricity, and paying allowances to about 150,000 poor households. 2 million euros are also being set aside for social development projects in East Jerusalem.

The European Commission's top official in Jerusalem, John Kjaer, said: "Decisions like this usually take up to nine months to prepare. The fact that the Commission got this moving so quickly is a clear sign that the European Commission understands how urgent it is to carry on giving generous support to the Palestinians at this very difficult time."

European Commission financial commitments to the Palestinian People 2000 - 2007:



EU - Palestine: visit by Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner to the Middle East

European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, visited Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian territory and Jordan from 26 February to 1 March. In each country the Commissioner discussed with key interlocutors how to strengthen bilateral relations with the EU, and the growing opportunities available under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), particularly in important areas such as education and energy. The visit was also an opportunity to explore with all parties the current state of play in the Middle East Peace Process, and how the EU can work with partners to create the conditions for progress.

In her meetings, the Commissioner welcomed efforts by Palestinian leaders to form a national unity government and to bring an end to the internal violence and strife, while stressing the need for the new government to respect the Quartet conditions.

During her visit to the Palestinian territory on February 28th, Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner visited a branch of the Cairo-Amman bank in Ramallah, on the occasion of the disbursement of social allowances through the European Union's Temporary International Mechanism. The visit was an opportunity for the Commissioner to meet with people who have been receiving the allowances and to get a first-hand account from them of the difficulties that they face, as well as an understanding of how they are using the help provided by the European Union. More than 75,000 vulnerable households have so far received these allowances since June 2006. Given that the average household has six people, this means that around 450,000 people have benefited from this support.

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner chatting with a recipient of the TIM social allowances



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Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner and Mr. John Kjaer, Head of Representation of the European Commission in the West Bank and Gaza, leaving the Cairo-Amman bank in Ramallah



Palestinian refugees: Commission announces 264 million euros for UNRWA's General Fund 2007-2010

European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), Karen Koning Abu Zayd, signed on February 28th in Ramallah (West Bank) a joint declaration on Community support to UNRWA for 2007-2010. The Community contribution to the UNRWA General Fund is expected to be 264 million euros over the next four years, which represents a 7% increase in comparison with the previous period. An initial contribution of 66 million euros for 2007 is already on its way. The EU's continuing support to UNRWA is an essential element of the EU strategy for the Middle-East Peace Process.

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner said: "The Palestinian refugees are among those most severely affected by the current socio-economic crisis. UNRWA is more important than ever in this difficult moment. The EU is UNRWA's biggest contributor and we will continue to work together to alleviate the hardship of the refugee population. She added: "The Palestine refugees issue is high on our agenda for the region and we will ensure that it will be dealt with during final status negotiations."

UNRWA's Commissioner-General, Karen Abu Zayd, thanked the European Commission for its support, saying, "We are very appreciative of the Commission's helpful engagement in the region, and are pleased to be able to count on such a reliable partner. We are especially grateful for the promised increase in funding, which is critical for UNRWA to be able to address the severe hardship of many of the Palestine refugees."

Since 1971 the European Commission has regularly supported UNRWA, becoming one of its largest donors. During the period 2003-2006, the European Commission provided 246 million euros to UNRWA's General Fund. The Community contribution represented 27% of UNRWA's funds and EU contribution (Commission and Member States) 58%.

Established in 1949, UNRWA today provides education, healthcare, social services, and emergency aid to 4.3 million Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan. It is the largest UN operation in the Middle East. The United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate, most recently extending it until June 2008.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Abu Zayd and European Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner at the signing ceremony at UNRWA's Women's training Centre in Ramallah



Special feature - Temporary International Mechanism (TIM)

What is the TIM?

The Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) was established in June 2006 as a mechanism to deliver direct assistance to the Palestinian people. The TIM uses financial resources of the European Commission, EU Member States and other donors to deliver essential services and financial support to vulnerable Palestinians. This mechanism is managed by the European Commission and Member States of the European Union. Activities conducted by the TIM are coordinated in partnership with the Office of the President of the Palestinian Authority.

What difference does the TIM make?

The TIM has paid allowances to more than 150,000 households. With a typical family size of six, this means that almost one million Palestinians have benefited from TIM social allowances. Beneficiaries of TIM allowances are public service providers (to ensure the continued provision of health, education and social services) as well as pensioners and vulnerable Palestinians who are no longer receiving social assistance from the Palestinian Authority. The funds have been provided by the European Commission and EU Member States and other donors.

Through the Temporary International Mechanism, over 77,000 Palestinian public service providers and pensioners are provided with a social allowance. This allowance reaches more than 88% of civilian employees of the Palestinian Authority, who have not received a regular salary since February 2006.

In addition, 75,000 Palestinian households that are normally supported by the public Social Hardship Cases programme benefit from TIM social allowances.

In the West Bank and Gaza, the European Commission funds running costs, consumables and equipment for hospitals and schools, and ensures access to social services as well as quality health care.

The TIM has also contributed to the continued supply of essential public utilities including access to electricity, water and sanitation for 1.3 million people in the Gaza Strip.

Following the destruction of the Gaza power plant by Israel in June 2006, the TIM has stepped in to provide fuel to hospital generators and water treatment plants to ensure that essential medical care and drinking water continue to be available. Over 5 million litres of fuel have been delivered under the emergency fuel supply programme.

Since its repair in November 2006, the electricity generated by the Gaza power plant is exclusively financed by the European Commission through the TIM. On average, around 315,000 litres of fuel are delivered per day to the Gaza power plant. In just over four months, more than 35 million litres were delivered.

Since June 2006, 207.5 million euros have been provided by the European Commission in support to the Palestinian people through the TIM.



The TIM delivers fuel in Gaza



Receiving allowances through a local bank branch



For more information of the TIM, see:

http://www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu/en/whatsnew/tim_in.htm

The TIM - providing a lifeline in Gaza

In the middle of Khan Younis, in the south of the Gaza Strip, 40-year-old Wa'el Khalil Al-Masri draws a long breath. The father of 12 works as a junior clerk for the Ministry of Health, but has not been paid for at least four months. "Debts are my lifestyle" says Mr Al-Masri, "My life is a challenge". But since July 2006, Mr Al-Masri has been receiving European assistance from the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM). The 1500 shekels (270 euros) for each payment isn't enough to enable his son to continue his university studies, but it does fill a gap in his large financial shortfall.

"If you have any relation with the Europeans, please tell them not to stop their support until the government is formed. We cannot survive without this payment" Mr Al-Masri states as a parting comment.

Further north, 26,000 Palestinians shelter in the refugee camp of Maghazi. A young social worker reflects on the difficult circumstances under which he faces his professional future. Dawood Abu Odah also has not received a salary for several months, and the 1500 Shekels he has been receiving monthly from the TIM is stretched to the limit. He is financially responsible for an extended family of 15, and his greatest fear is that he will be unable to continue with his work as a social worker because of the financial strain he is experiencing. "I'm in need of a shoulder to cry on" he says and, putting an even more personal spin on his situation, Abu Odah explains that he is obliged to stay single due to financial circumstances. "I want to get married" he declares.

One of the most seriously affected areas in the Gaza Strip is Beit Hanoun. Here, amidst a half-built home, Awad Hasan El-Othmanee struggles to provide for his 9 children and his elderly father. El-Othmanee works as a nurse in the Beit Hanoun Hospital, but has been suffering a real financial crisis, alleviated only by the TIM payments he has been receiving since June 2006. "All my life depended on debts from the grocery" he says. But since he started receiving the TIM allowances he has been able to cover some of those debts. "The 1500 shekels are very good, and they are on time", "....thank God, they let me survive with my family" says Mr El-Othmanee as his eyes fill with tears.



Wael Al Masri and children at home in Gaza

Eyes on projects: News



Launch of Science Museum and Meetmath exhibition at Al Quds University

Two innovative science projects were launched on February 12th at Al Quds University, with the support of the European Commission.

The **Science Discovery Centre** is the first interactive science museum in Palestine and one of only a handful of science museums in the Arab world. Designed to be a vital resource for teachers and students throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem, it will welcome some 27,000 students and 600 teachers a year.

The project is part of a larger programme of bilateral cooperation between Al Quds University and Bronfman Philanthropies (Israel), which the European Commission has supported to the tune of 2 million euros (72% of the overall cost). The overall programme involved the refurbishment of four science and technology laboratories at Al Quds University, development of an extra-curricular science program for Palestinian students, training of trainers in science education, MA and PhD exchange programs and the creation of an educational website on science.

The **Travelling Exhibition on Mathematics (MeetMath)** is also the first interactive maths exhibition in Palestine. It illustrates the history of mathematics and aims to improve children's understanding of mathematics through games and interactive displays that stimulate their intellectual curiosity and encourage their creativity.

The exhibition is the result of a three-way partnership between Al Quds University, The Bloomfield Science Museum (Israel) and Fondazione Idis - Citta della Scienza (Naples - Italy), and involved designers and workmen from all three countries. The exhibition was first shown in Naples and then at the Bloomfield Science Museum. It will now become permanently integrated into the future Al Quds Science Centre.



Raffaella Iodice de Wolff, head of sector at ECTAO, tries out one of the exhibits at the Science Museum



Displays from the

interactive

MeetMath

exhibition



Eyes on projects: News

Over 180 participants attend Palestinian Shippers Council first technical conference

On 20 January 2007, the Palestinian Shippers Council (PSC) organised its first Annual Technical Conference in Ramallah, with videolink to PSC members in Gaza. The conference brought together senior experts in trade logistics with PSC members to discuss the situation on movement and access for the Palestinian shipping community, shipping fees, customs issues and the urgent issues to be tackled by the PSC management. The conference was a large success. The PSC management was able to present concrete achievements during its first year of operations, such as expert advice to members, training, workshops and concrete cost reductions for members negotiated by the PSC. Many PSC members took the opportunity to outline the priorities that the PSC should tackle in its second year of operations.

The PSC was set up in 2006, with support from the European Commission. The aim of this two year project is to help the Palestinian shipping community (importers and exporters) defend their interests under the present adverse economic conditions. Due to the restrictions on movement Palestinian shippers are very isolated from the rest of the world, including the ports they use to export and import their goods. The PSC project is implemented by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Since the conference PSC membership has further risen to over 320 members. In the near future, PSC members will elect a board amongst themselves to make sure the PSC is well-governed once the project comes to a close.

For further information on the PSC: www.psc.ps



Participants at the first technical assembly of the Palestinian Shippers Council

24 MBA students graduate from the Building Business Bridges MBA programme

On 16 January 2007, a graduation ceremony was held for twenty-four students of the Building Business Bridges MBA programme, which is funded by the European Commission, at the Ambassador Hotel.

Speaking at the event, which was hosted by the Centre for Jewish-Arab Economic Development and the Palestinian Media and Development Institute, Mr. John Kjaer, head of the European Commission Technical Assistance Office in Jerusalem, said "Building Business Bridges has long term objectives such as developing a Palestinian/Israeli business leadership that will acquire competitive advantages in the international business arena for the benefit of all, or promoting business cooperation in the Middle East in a range of sectors, based on common interests."

The European Commission's funding for the Building Business Bridges MBA programme began in 2001. Support has carried on ever since for this unique project, through the European Union's "Partnership for Peace" programme.

Dr. Graham Jackson, Director of MBA Programmes at the Graduate School of Management of the University of Haifa gave the opening address, followed by Israeli and Palestinian private sector delegates, and diplomatic representatives from the Netherlands, Belgium and the United States, as well as the European Commission, all of whom support the programme.

As a leadership training programme, Building Business Bridges directly supports Israeli and Palestinian business people from a variety of fields, who have been identified as leaders and expressed a commitment to fostering economic cooperation in the Middle East.

The European Union itself was first based on economic cooperation, after the ravages of two world wars, to make war between its peoples unthinkable again. It is our hope that by building on the economic potential of cooperation, the same can be true here as well.



The Building Business Bridges graduating class



Ambassador Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the State of Israel and Mr. John Kjaer, Head of Representation of the European Commission in the West Bank and Gaza, with Liora Asa, and Kher Albaz, two of the programme graduates.

Eyes on projects:

Radio Networking for Democracy and Human Rights in Palestine - reaching out to local communities

Over the last three years, a project run by a European and a Palestinian NGO has pulled some 23 radio stations across the West Bank and Gaza into an effective network.

'Radio Networking for Democracy and Human Rights in Palestine' ran from 2004 until 2007, working with the struggling local radio sector which first grew up in the 1990s under the Palestinian Authority.

Internews Europe and AMIN trained some 150 media professionals in the sector, including journalists, technicians and managers, in areas as diverse as radio production techniques, human rights, business models - and how to really be local stations.

"Every journalist on every local station wants to be the star Middle East reporter," said Internews Europe director John West. "We had a big job to make the stations see that the unique value they can bring to their listeners is by being truly local. All the big issues play out locally. It may not be glamorous, but it's real."

The project's most dramatic successes came in linking the local stations together. In January 2005, during the first Palestinian presidential elections in eight years, a live network was created on Election Day, and a united broadcast of 14 local stations pooled for the first time.

Zaid Shalbak, owner of Al-Balad radio station in Jenin, remarked, "Coverage of the united broadcast was not only excellent but comprehensive. As individual radio stations, and due to the political problems we all face, we were not able to provide coverage the Palestinians deserved of the Elections. However, due to the help of AMIN/Internews, Al Balad and other stations succeeded beyond our expectations."

Similar pooling happened during other major Palestinian events. The project also followed a model of pulling journalists from different stations into joint production teams to make programming about issues such as human rights, women and children's issues. The resulting programs were played on 20 stations, and the team effort both increased networking in the sector and the radio coverage of sensitive social issues.

Given the economical and political situation of the Palestinian Territory, the technical level of the radio stations and broadcast has remained low. In 2006, Internews Europe and AMIN/Internews mapped the radio coverage in Palestine, finding the radio spectrum was overloaded and transmission equipment weak. The report made a number of recommendations which Palestinian officials and media professionals say they are considering.

AMIN and Internews Europe also granted basic equipment to the stations in January 2007. On that occasion, George Musleh, Manager of Radio Isis in Bethlehem, acknowledged AMIN/Internews' efforts in developing local radio stations, and expressed his gratitude for all the "benefits his staff and station as a whole received over the past two years through capacity building workshops, technical assistance, in-house training, and equipment grants".

More information is available at :
- www.palradiofm.com
- www.internews.eu

The project has been funded by the European Union through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.



Eyes on projects:

European Credit Guarantee Fund - sowing the seeds of success

In our December 2006 edition, we gave an overview of the European Credit Guarantee Fund. The goal of the fund is to help small businesses who would normally have difficulties getting access to credit because of insufficient or unacceptable collateral. The fund makes available a partial credit guarantee to participating partner banks to cover an agreed percentage of the commercial risk associated with lending to credit worthy small and medium sized enterprises.

The following examples show how the fund has made a real difference to small business owners - and by extension to their customers:



Difficulties for patients to go from Jenin to, for example, Ramallah, to seek medical treatment has sparked the need to improve local clinics, labs, etc. In addition, most public hospitals have suffered in the past year because of the political and economic crisis. The owner of this medical lab, Abed S., set it up in 1990 with a specialisation in diagnostic scanning. The business employs three technicians in addition to the owner. With a loan of 12,700 euros, Abed was able to purchase new diagnostic equipment which did not exist in the area. As a result, patients no longer need to travel to Ramallah to have the diagnosis, but can receive crucial diagnoses in Jenin.

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Sae'd is the owner of a small shop in Nablus selling coffee, herbal teas and other groceries. He has been in business since 1998 and employs one other person. Sae'd borrowed 7,500 euros to finance the purchase of a new coffee grinder and as working capital.



Ahmad is the owner of an aluminium shaping shop, established in 1995 in Jenin, and specializes in manufacturing, selling and installing aluminium window frames. The business employs six workers. With a loan of 37,500 euros he was able to finance the erection of a storage warehouse, enabling him to store inventory and finished products.

Special feature: helping war-affected children

The role of the European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) is to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the European Union. The aid is intended to go directly to those in distress, irrespective of race, religion or political convictions. Since 1992, DG ECHO has funded relief to millions of victims of both natural disasters and man-made crises in more than 60 countries.

In response to the deep humanitarian crisis, from the year 2000 to date, DG ECHO has provided over 275 million euros in aid for the neediest Palestinians.

DG ECHO's partners, including NGOs, the Red Cross family and UN Agencies, have implemented dozens of projects in a number of crucial sectors in the occupied Palestinian territory.

2,700 CHILDREN ATTENDING WEEKLY WORKSHOPS

Don't be afraid to say: "I'm scared"

TUBAS - In every conflict, the first victims are children: many are killed, many are injured, and many more become witnesses of an unpredictable violence which might affect their lives forever. These children need to be given tools to live as much as possible a normal life within the extra-ordinary situation of a war-context. This simple idea is at the heart of the school-based, psychosocial project implemented by the Danish Red Cross with the support of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Tubas and Qalqilya Governorates, in the Northern West Bank of the occupied Palestinian territory.

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The project - financed by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department, ECHO to the tune of 660,000 euros - targets 2,700 children aged 10 to 12 and scattered in 40 schools across the region. The kids attend weekly workshops, where they are trained to recognize their fears, to keep their aggressiveness under control, to work together in order to achieve tolerance and trust. The activities - conducted by trained teachers - take place once a week after regular school hours, and the participation is voluntary, with parents' consent. Through group-stories, body control exercises and self-expression activities, children are led to the acknowledgment of their own feelings, with the ultimate goal to become stronger and to be able to better face their stressful daily reality. Recreational workshops are also scheduled, with the aim to get the local community involved: kids go visiting old people or disabled children, they decorate or clean up schools, they plant trees. As the old say goes, "it takes a village to raise a child"; the community participation is deemed essential to build children's resilience and self-confidence. Summer Open Days are also foreseen for the benefit of approximately 10,000 children and community members. All in all, over one hundred teachers, 40 headmasters and many parents are involved in the project and attend regular meetings throughout the year, with the overall aim to create a safe environment where kids could finally concentrate on their most important task: to play and grow up in peace.

*How to build the resilience of war-affected kids?
An ECHO supported psychosocial project in TUBAS*

"I'm a normal child, but I don't want to have children"

TUBAS - "I don't want to have children, because when you have children you are too worried about them, about what could happen to them. I don't want to be like my mother, who is always afraid we might never come home, when we go out. She spends long hours waiting and worrying".

Mai Salamah lives the ordinary life of a 12 year old girl brought up in a normal family at the outskirts of Jedida, near Tubas, in the West Bank. Her father is a civil servant, employed at the Ministry of Education. The Salamah family has a tough time nowadays, without a steady income to rely on. Mai has three sisters and four brothers, plenty to play with. Nothing really special about her life, spent between home-works and TV shows. She wakes up is at 6.30, she takes breakfast at 7:00, then she walks to school. Mai doesn't seem to be what you would normally think of a 'conflict affected child'. But she is.

"The military incursions, the sudden raiding of homes, the arrest of family members and the harassment at checkpoints are leaving Palestinian children feeling vulnerable and confined - explains Salah Daraghmeah of the Palestine Red Crescent Society - These kids witness things that will mark them forever: their emotional and physical well being is heavily affected by the conflict".

In 2006 there has been a sharp increase in the levels of violence, tension and insecurity throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, with a consequent deterioration of the humanitarian situation. As often happens in such cases, the youngest are the ones to suffer the most. Teachers report that many children have developed aggressive behaviors and their concentration and motivation levels in classrooms have badly decreased. Parents often mention problems such as insomnia, nightmare, bed-wetting. Mr Daraghmeah is the coordinator of a psychosocial programme - financed by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department, ECHO - whose overall purpose is to build up children's resilience in front of stressful circumstances. "We are dealing with normal kids facing an abnormal situation. What we are trying to do is to increase their playfulness, their tolerance, their self-confidence; we want to help them to express and understand their feelings, in order to make them stronger and able to face stress".

Mai doesn't really know what the word 'stress' means. But she has her idea of what 'war' is.



"For me, war is my mother's despair. I mean, you learn to live with war, to see guns all over. I have seen people killed in the street, but what really gets me is checkpoints. Did you ever try checkpoints? Well, if you didn't, I cannot explain. I only know that my brothers and sisters often get stuck there, and when they are late the first thought is 'they will never come back'. Other than that, my life is normal... Except that anywhere I go, I feel like somebody is watching me. All the time. I never feel really safe, when I'm in the street I'm always worried. Like if I couldn't breath fresh air. Where do I feel secure? At home, with my family. The second place I feel secure in, is at school, with the teachers. Everything in between these two places scares me".

In order to help kids out, the Danish Red Cross and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society have developed a methodology based on both guided and recreational workshops. Today, in the girls' school of Jedida, dozens of young girls like Mai are guided to identify what happens to their bodies when they are afraid. "You see, now I can find the words - continues Mai - I'm learning to describe what is running through my head, or in my heart. I'm doing it with you. I still have friends who never speak about that, they just can't. How do I see my future? I think it will be good. I want to become a teacher, or an engineer, and to help poor people out. I hope I will have enough money to build myself a house and to travel, to France or to Lebanon. That is the dream. But the place I would like to go the most is Jerusalem, and I'm so mad, because it is a lot closer than France... still it is a dream".

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50 years of the EU - what are we celebrating?

Speech by Jose Manuel Durao Barroso, President of the European Commission on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome

A stronger Europe for a successful globalisation

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the past and the future meet. Let us first recognise 50 years of achievement. Peace, liberty and prosperity, beyond the dreams of even the most optimistic founding fathers of Europe. In 1957, 15 of our 27 members were either under dictatorship or were not allowed to exist as independent countries. Now we all are prospering democracies.



The EU of today is around 50 times more prosperous and with 3 times the population of the EC of 1957.

This enlarged European Union gives us not just economic but also political and strategic dimension. This dimension makes each member state stronger, amplifies each of our voices. Size matters in today's world. Together we can achieve results we could never dream of alone, tackling the challenges of the globalised world: climate change, energy security, terrorism and organized crime, mass migration, a more competitive economic environment and global poverty. The conflicts of the twentieth century made us small, European unity can give our greatness back.

Here, let me be clear. My vision of Europe is not one where only European institutions promote unity and Member States defend diversity. A real partnership is where European Institutions respect diversity and national governments promote unity. That's why we need the community method and subsidiarity.

Our unity is based on deep ties: common roots and common values. It is those values that make us a Community and a Union, not just a market. The triumph of the last 50 years has been the triumph of those values in Europe, of freedom and solidarity, delivered through a Community of law. Our challenge for the next 50 years is to propose, but not to impose, those values beyond Europe's borders. This is the unfinished European adventure.

To complete our unfinished adventure requires not just scale and values. It requires something from each of us, as leaders. Political will. As Robert Schuman put it: "Il n'est plus question de vaines paroles, mais d'un acte, d'un acte hardi, d'un acte constructif." First, "European Union" is not a "foreign power" invading our countries; it is our common project. Europe is not "them", it is "us". It is tempting, but it is not honest for national politicians to take all the credit and give "Brussels" all the blame. Let us resist that temptation. This is the ethic of European responsibility which we must all share.

Second, the political will to be open, not closed, to be brave, not frightened. To have the courage of our vision to shape globalisation with our values.

Third, the will to give Europe the capacity to act. A Europe of results demands efficient, democratic and coherent institutions. We must equip the European Union for globalisation. This is the kind of historical test that a generation of political leaders faces once in their lifetime. So let me finish with an appeal. Let's work together: European Commission, European Parliament, Member States and European citizens, to take the great legacy we received from our founding fathers into the 21st century. Together, I believe we can win: Europa gelingt gemeinsam.

Thank you.

50 years of the EU - a brief history

1945 - 1959 A peaceful Europe - the beginnings of cooperation

The European Union is set up with the aim of ending the frequent and bloody wars between neighbours, which culminated in the Second World War. As of 1950, the European Coal and Steel Community begins to unite European countries economically and politically in order to secure lasting peace. The six founders are Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The 1950s are dominated by a cold war between east and west. Protests in Hungary against the Communist regime are put down by Soviet tanks in 1956; while the following year, 1957, the Soviet Union takes the lead in the space race, when it launches the first man-made space satellite, Sputnik 1. Also in 1957, the Treaty of Rome creates the European Economic Community (EEC), or "Common Market". The signing of the Treaty of Rome is considered as the EU's birthday because it laid the foundations of today's ever closer European Union: a common market, a customs union and an area of common policies.

1960 - 1969 The 'Swinging Sixties' - a period of economic growth

The 1960s sees the emergence of 'youth culture', with groups such as The Beatles attracting huge crowds of teenage fans wherever they appear, helping to stimulate a cultural revolution and widening the generation gap. It is a good period for the economy, helped by the fact that EU countries stop charging custom duties when they trade with each other. They also agree joint control over food production, so that everybody now has enough to eat - and soon there is even surplus agricultural produce. May 1968 becomes famous for student riots in Paris, and many changes in society and behaviour become associated with the so-called '68 generation'.

1970 - 1979 A growing Community - the first Enlargement

Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom join the European Union on 1 January 1973, raising the number of member states to nine. The short, yet brutal, Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 results in an energy crisis and economic problems in Europe. The last right-wing dictatorships in Europe come to an end with the overthrow of the Salazar regime in Portugal in 1974 and the death of General Franco of Spain in 1975. The EU regional policy starts to transfer huge sums to create jobs and infrastructure in poorer areas. The European Parliament increases its influence in EU affairs and in 1979 all citizens can, for the first time, elect their members directly.

1980 - 1989 The changing face of Europe - the fall of the Berlin Wall

The Polish trade union, Solidarnosc, and its leader Lech Walesa, become household names across Europe and the world following the Gdansk shipyard strikes in the summer of 1980, Greece becomes the 10th member of the EU and Spain and Portugal follow five years later. In 1987 the Single European Act is signed. This is a treaty which provides the basis for a vast six-year programme aimed at sorting out the problems with the free-flow of trade across EU borders and thus creates the 'Single Market'. There is major political upheaval when, on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall is pulled down and the border between East and West Germany is opened for the first time in 28 years, this leads to the reunification of Germany when both East and West Germany are united in October 1990.

1990 - 1999 A Europe without frontiers

With the collapse of communism across central and eastern Europe, Europeans become closer neighbours. In 1993 the Single Market is completed with the 'four freedoms' of: movement of goods, services, people and money. The 1990s is also the decade of two treaties, the 'Maastricht' Treaty on European Union in 1993 and the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999. People are concerned about how to protect the environment and also how Europeans can act together when it comes to security and defence matters. In 1995 the EU gains three more new members, Austria, Finland and Sweden. A small village in Luxembourg gives its name to the 'Schengen' agreements that gradually allow people to travel without having their passports checked at the borders. Millions of young people study in other countries with EU support. Communication is made easier as more and more people start using mobile phones and the internet.

2000 - Today A decade of further expansion

The euro is the new currency for many Europeans. 11 September 2001 becomes synonymous with the 'War on Terror' after hijacked airliners are flown into buildings in New York and Washington. EU countries begin to work much more closely together to fight crime. The political divisions between east and west Europe are finally declared healed when no fewer than 10 new countries join the EU in 2004. Many people think that it is time for Europe to have a constitution but what sort of constitution is by no means easy to agree, so the debate on the future of Europe rages on.

Funding opportunities:

Detailed information on open tenders in the Mediterranean partner countries can be found in the EuropeAid tender database at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/cgi/frame12.pl>

For the list of tenders to be viewed together with all related documents, the following should be entered:

1. Where it says Please select search type, select By Program
2. In the Search by Program window, select MEDA
3. Status: tick Open
4. Type: tick all four boxed
5. Region: tick Mediterranean Partners
6. Country: tick All
7. Submit query

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Useful web links:

The EU in Palestine:

European Commission Technical Assistance Office to the West Bank and Gaza Strip
www.delwbg.ec.europa.eu

EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM)
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showpage.asp?id=979&lang=en&mode=g

EU Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS)
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=974&lang=en&mode=g

The EU in the Middle East:

EU Mediterranean and Middle East Policy
http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/med_mid_east/intro/index.htm

Middle East Peace Process
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showpage.asp?id=395&lang=en&mode=g

General EU links:

Europa: Gateway to the European Union
http://europa.eu/index_en.htm

The EU Presidency
<http://www.eu2007.de/en/>

The Council of the European Union
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=242&lang=en&mode=g

The European Commission
http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm

European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)
http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy
<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/r00001.htm>

Euro Mediterranean Partnership
http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/euromed/index.htm

Resources for the Media:

European Union Press Room
http://europa.eu/press_room/index_en.htm

EU for journalists: background details and briefs
<http://www.eu4journalists.eu/>